

## Who is John Hatherley and what's he been doing?

Delegates may remember that at the International Conference in Cambridge, England, in 1984, John Hatherley gave a talk on how the unitary U.K. Constitution prevented local authorities from introducing land taxation in order to raise local revenue.

Soon after that Conference, this South African-born member of the Economic and Social Science Research Association (ESSRA) accompanied fellow Georgist David Redfearn to the British Foreign Office to present Professor D. R. Denman's case for not ratifying the Law of the Sea Convention, but applying instead a version of land taxation to the deep ocean's mineral revenues. This idea had been presented by Prof. Denman at the Cambridge Conference.

The Foreign Office official heard the two attentively and certainly did not dismiss the Denman proposition; but he pointed out that there were too many personal vested interests in the present arrangements and that any hope of change would only be likely after 1990 when most of the present national delegates had been replaced.

Messrs. Redfearn and Hatherley found themselves invited to join the Economic Research Council following letters they wrote to the London Financial Times advocating taxation of land values. The ERC (current President Lord Derek Ezra, formerly chairman of the British National Coal Board) is a forum for mainly British matters of economic concern. David and John have since held a meeting of ERC members to explain the land taxation principle.

John Hatherley was Liberal Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the Cashalton Constituency, near London, from 1975 to 1984. During that time and subsequently, he campaigned vigorously to persuade his Party leaders to put land taxation before the electorate. The Liberal Party constitution contains a commitment to recover to the community the land values which the community creates.

A previous Liberal Parliamentary spokesman on economic affairs, John Pardoe, and the current one, David Penhaligon, both oppose land taxation. (One may be forgiven for wondering whether these men feared raising the matter in their rural constituencies in Cornwall, British agriculture having been de-rated in 1929.)

John's letters to David Steel, Liberal Party leader, resulted in lip service (or pen service) to the ideal with the assurance that the correspondence would be passed on to Richard Wainwright, Penhaligon's predecessor.

Wainwright clearly does not understand the principle of land taxation and complained of a lack of research. John thereupon sent him two documents. One was a copy of the relevant and admirable section of the 1931 Finance Act drawn up by the late Andrew MacLaren from whom John learned so much about land taxation. (This actually passed into law under the Labour administration in 1931, whereupon the Conservative opposition raised a phoney economic crisis, a coalition government was formed, and to the dismay of Churchill and others, the Finance Act was rescinded.)

The other document submitted by John was a fine draft of a site value rating bill drawn up by fellow ESSRA member T. A. Ende. John pointed out that pending a land valuation, a self-assessment procedure could be adopted. Wainwright described this as "lunatic" and as he announced his retirement from politics and was succeeded by Penhaligon, there the correspondence ended.

However, there has recently been a crumb of comfort for John Hatherley, fellow Liberals who favour land taxation, and ESSRA members. At the Liberal National Council meeting at Wigan, Lancashire in June, Simon Hughes, the young Member of Parliament for the London constituency of Bermondsey, introduced a motion welcoming the Liberal discussion paper on the Environment. Simon Hughes is Liberal Parliamentary spokesman on the Environment, and the discussion paper embodies a proposal to introduce a land tax.

Leaving the rostrum after complimenting Simon Hughes on the measure, John Hatherley's eyes met those of David Penhaligon, Council Chairman, who a few years ago had laughed John's proposal to introduce a land tax out of the Grand Committee Room of the House of Commons. On this occasion in Wigan, Penhaligon's eyes dropped.